

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A computer-implemented method of advertising, comprising:
2 (a) searching a plurality of electronic messages associated with at least
3 one electronic community to locate a first electronic message including a
4 query directed to a topic of interest; and
5 (b) subsequent to locating the first electronic message, sending a
6 second electronic message including a reply to the query and an advertisement
7 related to the topic of interest to which the query is directed.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein sending the second electronic message
2 includes sending the second electronic message to an originator of the first electronic
3 message.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein searching the plurality of electronic
2 messages includes searching at least one electronic message repository associated with
3 the electronic community.
- 1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein searching the plurality of electronic
2 messages includes searching a plurality of electronic message repositories associated
3 with a plurality of electronic communities.
- 1 5. The method of claim 3, wherein the electronic message repository is
2 accessible by a plurality of individuals, and wherein sending the second electronic
3 message includes posting the second electronic message on the electronic message
4 repository for viewing by the plurality of individuals.
- 1 6. The method of claim 3, wherein searching the plurality of electronic
2 messages includes receiving the plurality of messages from the electronic message
3 repository over a public communications network.

1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein searching the plurality of electronic
2 messages includes receiving the plurality of messages based upon membership in the
3 electronic community.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the reply includes an answer to the query.

1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the reply identifies to a reader of the
2 second electronic message an information source from which the answer may be
3 obtained.

1 10. The method of claim 1, wherein at least a subset of electronic messages in
2 the plurality of electronic messages comprise posts associated with a forum electronic
3 community, and wherein the second electronic message comprises a reply post.

1 11. The method of claim 1, wherein at least a subset of electronic messages in
2 the plurality of electronic messages comprise email messages associated with a
3 mailing list electronic community, and wherein the second electronic message
4 comprises a reply email message.

1 12. The method of claim 1, wherein at least a subset of electronic messages in
2 the plurality of electronic messages comprise chat messages associated with a chat
3 room electronic community, and wherein the second electronic message comprises a
4 reply chat message.

1 13. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of electronic messages are
2 associated with at least one electronic community selected from the group consisting
3 of a forum, a chat room, a mailing list, and combinations thereof.

1 14. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining whether the query
2 is capable of being answered, wherein sending the second electronic message is
3 performed if it is determined that the query is capable of being answered.

1 15. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining whether the query
2 has already been answered, wherein sending the second electronic message is
3 performed if it is determined that the query has not yet been answered.

1 16. The method of claim 1, wherein sending the second electronic message
2 includes selecting an advertisement from a plurality of advertisements based upon the
3 query.

[illegible]

1 17. An apparatus, comprising:

2 (a) at least one processor; and

3 (b) program code configured to be executed on the at least one
4 processor to search a plurality of electronic messages associated with at least
5 one electronic community to locate a first electronic message including a
6 query directed to a topic of interest; and, subsequent to locating the first
7 electronic message, send a second electronic message including a reply to the
8 query and an advertisement related to the topic of interest to which the query is
9 directed.

1 18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the program code is configured to
2 send the second electronic message to an originator of the first electronic message.

1 19. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the program code is configured to
2 search the plurality of electronic messages by searching at least one electronic
3 message repository associated with the electronic community.

1 20. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the electronic message repository is
2 accessible by a plurality of individuals, and wherein the program code is configured to
3 send the second electronic message by posting the second electronic message on the
4 electronic message repository for viewing by the plurality of individuals.

1 21. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the program code is configured to
2 search the plurality of electronic messages by accessing the electronic message
3 repository over a public communications network.

1 22. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the program code is configured to
2 subscribe to the electronic community such that the plurality of messages are received
3 based upon membership in the electronic community.

1 23. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the reply includes an answer to the
2 query.

1 24. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the reply identifies to a reader of the
2 second electronic message an information source from which the answer may be
3 obtained.

1 25. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein at least a subset of electronic
2 messages in the plurality of electronic messages comprise posts associated with a
3 forum electronic community, and wherein the second electronic message comprises a
4 reply post.

1 26. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein at least a subset of electronic
2 messages in the plurality of electronic messages comprise email messages associated
3 with a mailing list electronic community, and wherein the second electronic message
4 comprises a reply email message.

1 27. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein at least a subset of electronic
2 messages in the plurality of electronic messages comprise chat messages associated
3 with a chat room electronic community, and wherein the second electronic message
4 comprises a reply chat message.

1 28. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the program code is further configured
2 to determine whether the query is capable of being answered.

1 29. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the program code is further configured
2 to determine whether the query has already been answered.

1 30. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the program code is configured to
2 select the advertisement from a plurality of advertisements based upon the query.

1 31. A program product, comprising:

2 (a) program code configured to search a plurality of electronic
3 messages associated with at least one electronic community to locate a first
4 electronic message including a query directed to a topic of interest; and,
5 subsequent to locating the first electronic message, send a second electronic
6 message including a reply to the query and an advertisement related to the
7 topic of interest to which the query is directed; and

8 (b) a signal bearing medium bearing the program code.

1 32. The program product of claim 31, wherein the signal bearing medium

2 includes at least one of a recordable medium and a transmission medium.